

paper houses by TolkienGirl

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Summary: His face was a blur, his eyes are forever. [Nancy, Stancy-ish angst...post S2]

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She can't exactly avoid seeing Steve. They're a strange patchwork of a people now, the Byers and the Wheelers and everyone else.

So Nancy just has to deal with it. Steve is endlessly polite, even if he can't look her in the eyes some days.

Some things are easier when the world is ending.

"Do you miss him?" Jonathan asks—not jealously, just in that soft way of his.

Nancy twists the loose thread at the edge of her sleeve, and answers, quick and calm, "No—not like that."

But it's not that simple.

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For a while, it was easy to blame him. He was the one who invited her over, who got her up in his room, who kept playing for time and playing for keeps, and if he hadn't walked into her heart like he owned the place, so much might never have—Barb might never have —

But that is less than half the story.

And the other half is Nancy.

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They were selfish then.

Lovestruck little beasts, hungry for each other's touch. They were selfish, and it cost them everything they had.

Nancy took the first blow. She ran after the truth, after the monster, and away from everything else.

She didn't think he would follow, but he did. She thought she could

let him go, but he keeps coming back.

Half the time, she wishes she could chalk it up to some dumb hero complex—

But that is less than half the story, and it's not that simple.

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There was a year. If Nancy really wanted to be free of him, she supposes, she never should have let him have that year.

(But was it his? Or was it hers—all hers, every way she wanted it?)

He isn't the one who stopped wanting. He isn't the one who kept running.

And Nancy never knows what she wants.

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After, she learns that the kids *love* him. It's no surprise. He's a big kid at heart.

(Only children and fools tell the truth.)

You don't love me?

She had no right, no right to believe that they were both playing at the same game.

(Only children and fools.)

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There was a year, and he was there. And he was kind, and his arms were warm around her, and sometimes when he made her laugh she forgot about Barb, and sometimes when he kissed her she felt like herself again, only it wasn't the self she kept chasing.

And none of that was his fault, but none of it was her salvation.

She shouldn't hate him for any of it.

And she *doesn't*, but she didn't do much to tell him that.

Bullshit.

His face was a blur, but his eyes are forever.

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Steve is leaning against his car, hair and sunglasses, laughing over something Dustin said, and Nancy wants more than anything to think that he's happy.

Jonathan asks if she misses him, and she gives half an answer.

Because only children and fools tell the truth.